

Readers' forum

Home births as safe as hospitals, they say

To the editor: 6-26-87

We urge the Department of Business Regulation to consider the following information in their investigation of Dr. David Warden, M.D., our family doctor, for allegedly committing negligent homicide when a baby he delivered at home died 12 hours later.

While we regret the infant's death, we believe home births to be at least as safe as hospital births and that parents should have the right to alternatives in health care.

In 1982, my wife and I were expecting our first child and we decided to go to the medical library to read up on pregnancy and delivery. We were surprised to find out that many countries had infant mortality rates lower than the United States. In trying to determine why, we learned that many of those countries encourage mothers to

deliver at home.

We were also surprised to read that since the mid 1970's electronic fetal monitoring has been used for 60 to 70 percent of all births in the U.S., even though five random clinical trials between 1976 and 1981 found that electronic monitoring was not associated with a lower perinatal mortality. What the tests did show was that electronic monitoring more than doubled the rate of Cesarean section delivery, also without decreasing mortality.

We found a 1982 report reviewing 450 articles on episiotomy. The author states that there were no convincing data that supported the concepts that a routine episiotomy had benefits in "ease of repair," "fewer third degree lacerations," or "preventing fetal brain damage." The report concluded that in America episiotomies are performed on two-thirds of all births and that the rate could be reduced by at

least half without harm to mother or baby.

After reviewing the medical reports, we concluded that gadgetry and intervention during the birth would be unnecessary and potentially dangerous and that the public has been falsely led to believe otherwise.

We have found Dr. Warren to be aware of the problems with births as now being practiced in hospital settings and to offer a choice to those patients who desire an alternative. We wonder if more doctors would offer alternatives if they weren't afraid of unfair rulings against them by the Department of Business Regulations.

If the medical licenser laws grant a monopoly to a particular approach to health care, they will serve to assure an ineffective health care system.

Stephen and Jenae Westhoff
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UP&L may settle lawsuit to get their records out of court

sealing of court records containing the settlement terms.

The media organizations maintain that terms of the settlement are not a private matter between UP&L and the victims' heirs, but are of general interest to the public, which is entitled to know who is responsible for the mine disaster.

Attorneys representing the heirs have argued against revealing the terms, saying that in this case the public does not have a right to know, and release of the terms will subject the heirs to harassment from swindlers and unwanted solicitations from salesmen.

In March, 4th District Judge Ray M. Harding approved, then ordered sealed, the terms of the settlement, in which UP&L agreed to pay surviving

er this month. Following those arguments and the filing of some additional memoranda, Harding was ready to rule on the case. But he held off after receiving a letter from the attorneys indicating that they are working on a compromise.

Anderson said attorneys for the two sides should know by Monday whether they can reach an out-of-court settlement.

He stressed that the news media are not seeking a compromise with UP&L on a separate but related issue — the media request for the court to unseal records containing depositions taken by UP&L attorneys in preparation for trial of the lawsuit filed against the utility on behalf of the Wilberg victims' heirs.

That lawsuit was settled before it went to trial by UP&L's agreement to

gaging in a cover-up of its responsibility for the mine disaster, the journalists argue. The news media group alleges that UP&L wants to keep the depositions sealed to hide information from potential adverse litigants in other legal actions stemming from the Wilberg fire.

UP&L attorneys have denied the cover-up allegations and said the news media wants public release of the depositions only to make UP&L look bad in order to create sensational news.

Fourth District Judge Cullen Y. Christensen heard arguments earlier this month on the request to unseal the depositions. He has yet to rule.

Midwifery course set

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